

MAR 27 1965

Arms Factory Raid Yields 373 Machine Guns

BY WALTER AMES and
CHARLES E. DAVIS JR.

Times Staff Writers

Investigators seized 373 machine guns late Friday at a City of Industry arms plant to prevent them from falling into the hands of private armies in California.

Armed with a search warrant, the raiding party entered the Erquiaga Arms Co., 15036 E. Proctor Ave., just after 5 p.m.

They found the machine guns stacked in racks, muzzles down. They also seized about 100,000 rounds of ammunition and three machine gun silencers which had been built inside empty beer cans.

Former Castroite

The raid was made by about 30 federal and state agents and deputy sheriff's, Atty. Gen. Thomas C. Lynch said.

The plant reportedly is owned by Juan Erquiaga. It was understood that he is now on a trip to Guatemala. It also was understood that Erquiaga once was a member of Castro's revolutionary

forces but is now strongly anti-Castro.

The search warrant issued by Municipal Judge Fred Rabb of Citrus Municipal Court in West Covina charged that the company had no state permit for possession or sale of machine guns.

However, Atty. Gen. Lynch admitted the implications were much more serious and that there had been reports the guns would be sold illegally to U.S. citizens.

"Speed was necessary in this raid," said Lynch, "since our office has definite information that some of these illegal weapons were intended for private armies in California."

A spokesman for the attorney general identified such extremist organizations as the Minutemen and the Rangers as among intended recipients. Lynch has proposed a bill to the state Legislature urging that such organizations be outlawed.

The machine guns are about 20 inches long. They have a pistol grip instead of a stock, so one could easily be concealed beneath a man's

coat. They fire a 9 mm bullet at a reported rate of 35 rounds a second.

When the raiding party entered the one-story plant, they found four employees there. The agents said George Ingram was the man in charge and that he informed them Erquiaga was out of the country.

Workers at an adjacent plant told reporters the machine guns were frequently tested in an area behind the arms plant, test rounds being fired into a barrel.

This news surprised Sheriff's Lt. E. D. Villines who led deputies on the raid. The plant is only two long city blocks from the City of Industry sheriff's office.

Each of the machine guns bore the marking "JURE" and below this, "MR64" and also the name "Erquiaga."

Although no arrests were made, Dep. Dist. Atty. Maurice Oppenheim, who prepared the search warrant and accompanied the raiding party, said evidence seized will be studied by the district attorney's office with a view to possible prosecution.

The raiders spent hours at the plant studying company papers and files.